James I. Good

The German Reformed
Coetus, 1747-1793

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II.

THE GERMAN REFORMED COETUS, 1747–1792.

ON September 29, 1897, the Reformed Church in the United States (formerly German Reformed) celebrated the sesquicentennial of the origin of its first denominational organization—the Coetus. An article on the Coetus, 1747–1792, is therefore timely and important.

I. The First German Settlers in America.

Among the makers of America, the Germans should not be forgotten, for theirs was an honorable part in the settlement of this continent and the founding of this commonwealth. Indeed, the first European settlement in America was made under the leadership of a German in Venezuela, the name of which (Welzerland or Venezuela) is derived from Welzer, the German, who made it. Neither would Columbus' voyage of discovery have been possible but for the instruments of navigation perfected by Germans just before his time. And it was from the rich German aristocratic families like the Fuggers of Augsburg that the king of Spain was able to borrow money in order to colonize the new world. In doing so he mortgaged part of South America to the Welzer family, which led to the settlement of Venezuela.* Long before William Penn, the Germans introduced fair dealing with the Indians. They also gave for our defense in the war of the Revolution such generals as Nicholas Herkimer, "the hero of Oriskany," and Baron Steuben from among the Reformed, and General Muhlenberg from among the Lutherans. The Germans were the first to protest against slavery (1685), and the first to print the Bible in America at Germantown. Of these Germans, the Reformed were an important part, constituting about half of their number.

The Reformed did not come to America in large numbers till the beginning of the eighteenth century. Yet they had their forerunner here in Peter Minuit, the first governor of New Amsterdam. He was born (1580) at Wesel, Germany, where he was a

* See an article by Mr. Julius F. Sachse in the *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania German Society* for 1897.

deacon of the Huguenot Church. Entering the Dutch service, he was sent to New Amsterdam (1625), where for six years he ruled with great ability. He became an elder in the Dutch Reformed Church there and aided in its foundation. In 1638, having left the Dutch for the Swedish service, he planted a Swedish colony in the State of Delaware. In both New York and Delaware he introduced fair dealing with the Indians; and forty-four years before William Penn made his famous Shackamaxon treaty with the Indians, Minuit had made a similar treaty with them, buying all the land from Cape Henlopen to the falls of Trenton.* It was not, however, till after the settlement of Germantown (1683) that the Reformed began to come in large numbers, so that by 1731 there were 15,000 in Pennsylvania and their rapid growth alarmed the English government, who feared lest Pennsylvania would become a German rather than an English colony.

The causes of this immigration are given in a *Memorial to the English People*, published in 1754. "Some of them fled from the severe persecutions to which they had been exposed at home on account of their being Protestants; others from the oppression of civil tyranny and attracted by the pleasant hope of liberty under the milder influence of the British government; others drawn by the solicitations of their countrymen who had settled here before them; but far the greater part by the prospect they had of relieving themselves under their deep poverty and providing better for themselves and their families." This *Memorial* emphasizes too strongly the poverty of the Germans, and not enough their civil and religious persecutions. For, from 1684 to 1693, the Palatinate around Heidelberg, from which most of them came, had been devastated by two dreadful wars, the first of which had utterly destroyed 1200 villages and towns, and rendered 40,000 people homeless. The dread of such wars as well as the persecutions of their Catholic rulers led them to come to America. Thus in 1705 and 1719 the persecutions of the Reformed in the Palatinate were so great that on both occasions they appealed to the German Protestant States to relieve them, and Brandenburg, Hesse Cassel and England stepped in and saved them.† The Germans came to Pennsylvania because of the very warm invitation of William Penn. He had three reasons for being very friendly to the German Reformed. First, his mother had been Reformed; secondly, his greatest teacher had been Reformed—for he had attended the University of Saumur in France, where Prof. Moses Amyraut was

* See *Peter Minuit Memorial*, by Rev. C. Cort, D.D., Dover, 1895.

† For these persecutions, see *History of the Reformed Church of Germany*, by Rev. James I. Good, D.D., pp. 225–307.

his teacher; and, thirdly, one of his most intimate friends was the pious Reformed princess, Elizabeth of the Palatinate, whom he places in his book, *No Cross, No Crown*, among the saints of earth. Along with the Germans came also many Swiss, who were forced to leave their native Alps because of the overcrowding of Switzerland by Protestant refugees.

II. The First Organization.

It is to the honor of the Reformed that they were the first to celebrate Protestant religious services in the new world: a colony of French Reformed went to Rio Janeiro in 1557. The Reformed were thus the first to send foreign missionaries to the heathen, sending them there one year before the Lutherans sent their missionaries to Lapland. The first Presbyterial organization in America was set up by the Reformed—by the Dutch in Brazil, where Classes and a Synod were founded in 1637. We find, too, that there was a Dutch church at Newcastle, Del., as early as 1654, which was in existence there when Penn landed in Pennsylvania (1682). These, however, did not have any historical connection with the Germans who settled Pennsylvania. The first attempt to organize a Reformed congregation in Pennsylvania was made among the Dutch at Bensalem and Sammeny (Neshaminy), now Churchville, Bucks county, Pa., by Rev. Paul Van Vleeq, on May 10, 1710. He seems immediately to have begun laboring among the Germans as well as the Dutch, for nineteen days later he baptized ten children at Skippach, and by June 4 had organized a consistory at Whitemarsh by ordaining elders and deacons. But this organization soon went to pieces, Mr. Van Vleeq leaving Pennsylvania in 1713. The German Reformed, however, though without ministers, kept up religious services as well as they were able; they were a pious folk, very different from many of the German immigrants of to-day, who are rationalists. Many of them had left their homes for the sake of their Reformed faith, and they loved it so well that they brought their Heidelberg catechisms and hymn books as well as their Bibles with them. Pious schoolmasters would read the sermons, or where there were no schoolmasters they would sometimes choose one of their own number to hold services.

The first German Reformed congregation, that is still in existence, to be founded is the one at Germantown, where, as the Halle *Reports* say, the Reformed built a church in 1719. They do not seem to have had a pastor; for the cornerstone was laid by a Lutheran minister.* The earliest German Reformed minister in

* This congregation has since gone over to the Presbyterians.

Pennsylvania seems to have been Samuel Guldin. He was a Swiss Pietist, and had been assistant at the cathedral at Berne. But Berne was not ready for the Pietism it afterwards received. He was dismissed from his position, and must have come to this country before 1718, as in that year he published his *Short Apology* at Philadelphia. But Guldin did not attempt to organize the Reformed into congregations. As he says, he did not want to build up a denomination or to found a sect. He seems to have preferred to be an evangelist, preaching as the occasion offered and performing other ministerial acts. Thus he would sometimes preach at Germantown and also at Oley, Berks county, where he lived. He died December 31, 1745.*

But God raised up from among the schoolmasters of the Reformed a man who was to become the organizer of the Reformed Church, John Philip Boehm. He had been driven by Catholic persecution to this country from Worms in 1720, where he had been a Reformed schoolmaster and precentor. He lived at Witpen, now Blue Bell, Montgomery county, Pa. The Reformed of his district had hitherto communed with the Presbyterians at Philadelphia. But they were not satisfied with the arrangement, and so they requested Boehm to become their pastor and exercise full ministerial functions. This he hesitated to do, as he had never been ordained, but so greatly did they insist that he finally consented. He at once organized them into three congregations (1725), thus perfecting the first congregational organization of the German Reformed. These three congregations were Falkner Swamp, near Pottstown, Pa.; Skippach, about eight miles north of Norristown; and Whitemarsh, between Norristown and Philadelphia. He administered the communion to them for the first time in the fall of 1725 and had 101 communicants. Of these three original congregations, Skippach and Whitemarsh soon became extinct, so that Falkner Swamp is now the oldest organization in the Reformed Church in the United States. Boehm also had a complete Church Constitution adopted by all three of these congregations. This Constitution is thoroughly Reformed and Presbyterial. It calls for a consistory of elders and deacons, and it was not only Presbyterial in government but Calvinistic in doctrine; for it adopted the Canons of Dort as well as the Heidelberg Catechism as its confession. On the Lord's Supper it was thoroughly Calvinistic as it describes the sacraments as signs and seals; and it demands Church discipline.

But Mr. Boehm's parish included more than these three congre-

* See article on *Guldin, the Pietist,* by Prof. J. H. Dubbs, in the *Reformed Church Quarterly,* 1892.

gations. The Reformed were spreading out into the wilderness beyond him, and calling for his services. A very interesting colony settled at Tulpehocken (Indian for "the land of turtles") near Lebanon, Pa., consisting of Germans who were sent by Queen Anne to New York State, and, being dissatisfied with their treatment there, came down the Susquehanna river to Pennsylvania. The Reformed among them sent a request to Boehm to visit them. He went also to Conestoga, Lancaster county, Pa., where he first administered the Lord's Supper, October 14, 1727, to fifty-nine communicants, and to Tulpehocken, October 18, 1727, where he had thirty-two communicants.

For three years Boehm labored very successfully and peaceably among his congregations, baptizing more than 200 children, besides adults. Then an ordained Reformed minister arrived, the Rev. George Michael Weiss. He was a native of the Palatinate, and was educated at Heidelberg. The Palatinate consistory, though poor, sent him over, and he landed at Philadelphia, September 21, 1727, with 400 Palatines. Through him the first Reformed congregation of Philadelphia was organized, and of it he became the first pastor. But while Weiss' coming brought help to Boehm, it also caused dissension. Some of Weiss' sea companions settled in the Goshenhoppen district, and he was thus brought into contact with one of Boehm's prominent members at Skippach, named Jacob Reiff. The result was that a number of Boehm's members at Skippach preferred the ministrations of Weiss, because he was an ordained minister and Boehm was not. This led the three congregations of Boehm to seek ordination for him, and they applied to the Dutch Reformed ministers at New York. These referred them to the Reformed Church of Holland, under whose care they were. The latter gave as their decision that, "under the circumstances all the transactions of Boehm, even his administration of the sacraments, must be deemed 'lawful;' but that to supply what was hitherto lacking, he must be ordained." The consistories of his three congregations accepted this decision, and he was ordained at New York by the Rev. Henry Boel and the Rev. Gualther DuBois, November 23, 1729. The next day Weiss and Boehm had a reconciliation, but the refractory element at Skippach refused to accept Boehm again as their pastor, although earnestly besought by the Classis of Amsterdam (in Holland) to do so. As Jacob Reiff intended taking a trip to Europe, Weiss decided to accompany him, and the Reformed Church at Skippach and Philadelphia requested them to collect money for them while in Europe. Mr. Weiss returned to America in 1731, while Reiff remained a year longer. But although considerable money was

collected, yet Reiff delayed settlement for various reasons and the money was not handed over to the Reformed churches of Pennsylvania until Schlatter's time, fifteen years later, when he turned over 650 dollars. This delay naturally caused much criticism and suspicion among the Germans. The Reformed, therefore, received no immediate relief from Weiss' trip to Europe. On the contrary, while the field was enlarging in Pennsylvania, Weiss himself went away to New York State, where he preached in Schoharie and Dutchess counties for fifteen years, and Boehm was therefore left almost alone to minister to the Pennsylvania churches during that period.

It is true, several young men had come to America either as ministers or candidates, but they did not work in harmony with Boehm. Thus, John Peter Miller was sent over by the Palatinate Consistory in 1730. He had been a fellow-student of Weiss, and after coming to America was ordained to the ministry by the Presbyterian Synod at Philadelphia. Boehm relinquished to him the distant Reformed congregation at Tulpehocken (1731). But grievously was he disappointed in Miller. Four years later the latter was proselyted by Beissel, the Seventh-Day Baptist of Ephrata, and joined that sect under the name of Brother Jabez. He took with him the elders and a number of the heads of families of the Tulpehocken congregation, but all returned to their old faith except two men and one woman. Another young Reformed licentiate was Henry Goetschey, a Swiss. While Weiss was in Europe, Goetschey took charge of the Goshenhoppen congregation. Boehm complains that he interfered with his work by going and preaching to the congregations in Oley and Tulpehocken, and urging the people not to receive Boehm's Church Constitution. A third young man was John B. Rieger. He was a native of the Palatinate and had studied at Basle and Heidelberg. He came to America in 1731. The Philadelphia congregation being vacant, he preached there for a while; but not proving satisfactory, he went to Amwell, a large new German congregation in West Jersey, east of Easton, Pa. Afterwards (in 1744) he was at Lancaster. But he was vacillating and gave no aid to Boehm.

Thus Boehm stands out prominently as the pioneer Reformed minister of Pennsylvania. Bravely he stood at his post performing herculean labors. His congregations covered what is now four counties, stretching from Philadelphia to Tulpehocken and Conestoga on the west. Philadelphia he supplied with preaching once a month, and Tulpehocken and Conestoga with the communion twice a year. For all he received very little, but supported himself mainly by his own labors. He sent a number of reports

to the Holland fathers, but complains that after 1731 he had received no reply from them for years and he feared they had forgotten him and the Pennsylvania Reformed. But in 1737, the Rev. Mr. Dorstius arrived to take charge of the Dutch Reformed congregation at Neshaminy, Pa. He came bearing letters from Holland and an appointment to be inspector over the Pennsylvania churches. Weiss' visit to Europe in 1730 had stirred up the Dutch and the Palatinate to do something for Pennsylvania. The Palatinate Church had already in 1728 written to the Dutch Synods, urging the claims of the Pennsylvania Germans. In 1731, while the Synod of South Holland was in session at Dort, 800 Palatines passed through on their way to America. The Synod visited them in their ships, prayed with them, ministered to their necessities and gave them the assurance that the Church of Holland would help them. They fulfilled their word by sending Dorstius in 1737. Dorstius, soon after his arrival, requested Boehm to furnish him with the history and statistics of the Pennsylvania churches, and also the amount of salary each congregation could raise for a pastor. Boehm, although it was winter, with great labor and travel, finally reported in 1740 that there were seventeen congregations which promised 123 pounds and 165 bushels of oats. But the Germans seem not to have worked in fullest sympathy with Dorstius. Still he is the only one named inspector or superintendent before Schlatter. Neither Boehm nor Weiss ever held that office as far as we have been able to find.

III. The First Controversy (1742).

The want of a sufficient number of ministers for the Germans allowed room for the development of various kinds of fanaticism. Some religious extremists had already come over from Europe. Thus Gruber, the inspirationist, began working in Oley, 1738; Henry Antes, the pious Reformed elder of Falkner Swamp, seconded Gruber's call to union and prayer. Whitfield's visit (1740) intensified the interest. He held religious services before a large congregation at Antes' house, when Bohler, the Moravian bishop, also preached. It was, however, the coming of Count Zinzendorf in November, 1741, that brought matters to a crisis. He proposed a union of all the Germans under the idea of "tropes."* The idea of a "trope" was that a member could remain in his own denomination and at the same time belong to a circle or "trope" of the Moravians. With this idea many of the German and Swiss immigrants in Pennsylvania were already familiar, as the

* The trope idea was suggested by Phil i. 18; "What then? notwithstanding, *every way*, ... Christ is preached."

Moravians had introduced such circles at Basle, Geneva and elsewhere among the Reformed in Europe. With this "trope" idea of the Moravians, the Reformed more easily fell in, because of the old Reformed idea of *ecclesiola in ecclesia.** Count Zinzendorf could also appeal to the Reformed, for he had himself been ordained by a Reformed minister, Jablonski, the court preacher of the elector of Brandenburg, who was also a Moravian bishop. Indeed, Zinzendorf was quite fortunately circumstanced, for he could also appeal to the Lutherans, as the Moravians claimed the Augsburg Confession as their creed.

In two places Zinzendorf's movement gained power among the Reformed: at Falkner Swamp, where Antes about a month after the arrival of Zinzendorf issued a call for a union conference, and at Germantown, where the preacher at the Reformed church, John Bechtel, was in sympathy with Zinzendorf, and allowed him to preach his first sermon after his arrival in his church. The Reformed church at Germantown had been influenced by its surroundings and was inclined toward such movements, as it was located in a settlement largely composed of the sects. This union movement was called "The Congregation of God in the Spirit," and its first Synod was held at Antes' call, January 1, 1742, at Germantown. After the first meeting they held their meetings monthly. At their April meeting two important events occurred: Bechtel, the pastor of the Reformed church, was ordained by Nitschman, the Moravian bishop, and he also proposed a new Catechism which was different from the Heidelberg and was based on the Berne articles (1528). It represented the lower Calvinism of the Brandenburg Reformed under Jablonski, over against Boehm's high Calvinism. This Catechism was printed two weeks later, and was afterwards translated from the German into English and Swedish. Zinzendorf claimed that he was gladly allowed to preach in every Reformed congregation which accepted this Catechism. Lischy, "the Swiss preacher," was commissioned by the Moravians to introduce the "Congregation of God in the Spirit" among the Reformed congregations. He had, before coming to America, been acquainted with the Moravians at Basle and was ordained by the Moravians here in 1743. We thus see that this union movement had gained considerable power and threatened to disintegrate the Reformed and absorb them into the Moravians.

Two Reformed ministers rose up against this movement: Boehm and Guldin. Guldin attacked it in his *Unpartisan Witness* (1743).

* A little congregation within a large one, composed of the pious or spiritually minded who would meet for prayer and Bible study.

This was a surprise to many, since in Switzerland he had been a Pietist. But he was a churchly Pietist, and was too strong in his affection for the Reformed and their Catechism to go into this movement. Boehm's attack, however, was the more important in its effects; for while Guldin's was merely an individual's attack, Boehm's was supported by the Reformed congregations of which he was pastor. He first published, August 23, 1742, his *True Letter of Warning*, after "The Church of God in the Spirit" had held their seventh Synod; and was duly answered by Neisser, a Moravian. On May 19, 1743, he published *Another Letter of Warning*. These publications caused a sensation, and resulted in a division between the Reformed who were in "The Church of God in the Spirit" and those who remained true to their Church. Those congregations which were at first careless about the matter began to inquire into the character of their ministers. Thus there was a conference of twelve Reformed congregations at Heidelberg, Berks county, August 29, 1743, attended by fifty elders and deacons. All the Reformed congregations between the Schuylkill and Susquehanna rivers seem to have been represented, except Lancaster. Lischy was charged before them with being a Moravian, but he vindicated himself and was called by them. This event took away from Boehm much of his western territory. In 1744 Lischy attempted to get into the east, as he had got into the west, for he appeared at Goshenhoppen and preached there to the Reformed. But the Reformed, though thus at first careless as to whom they received as minister, became more watchful. And when the Moravian conference was held at Kreuz Creek (1746), the Reformed at York refused to allow Lischy to preach for them any more. Bechtel, who as late as 1744 claimed to be still Reformed though objecting to the 80th and 114th questions of the Heidelberg Catechism, was also compelled to resign at Germantown (1744), and went to Bethlehem among the Moravians. The result of the controversy was that a number of earnest individuals like Antes, Bechtel, Brandmuller and Rauch were carried over to the Moravians, while the congregations still remained firmly attached to the Reformed; even the congregation in Germantown, which had been most affected by this movement, soon after Bechtel's resignation asked Boehm to supply them with preaching, though refusing to accept his Church Constitution. Thus Boehm saved the Reformed from disintegration in this controversy.

IV. The First Coetus.

We have seen the danger to which the Church early was exposed to disintegration, and with what difficulty Boehm was able to sus-

tain himself. We can therefore realize the great importance of Schlatter's coming in 1746. This was the more important because Boehm's declining years were beginning to tell on his work. Fortunately, Weiss had returned from New York State (1746), because of the French and Indian wars, and had taken the Goshenhoppen charge. Schlatter's coming not merely strengthened the Reformed, but also completed the organization of the Reformed in the Coetus.

The Rev. Michael Schlatter was born at St. Gall, Switzerland, July 14, 1716. He was educated in his native city and there admitted to the ministry April 10, 1739. After waiting several years for a position, he became vicar or assistant to Dekan Beyel of Wigoldingen, in the canton of Thurgau, and on August 17, 1745, returned to St. Gall as evening preacher of the church in Linzebuehl, its southern suburb. Soon after, however (January 9, 1746), he left St. Gall and, stopping at Schaffhausen and Heidelberg on his way, arrived in Holland, recommended to them by the consistory at Heidelberg. He came just in the nick of time, for they seem to have been looking for some one to send to America as superintendent in Dorstius' place, and also as helper to Boehm in his declining years. The deputies at once appointed him (May 23, 1746), giving him instructions to organize the congregations in Pennsylvania, and to find out what they would give toward the support of ministers. By June 1 he had sailed, and on August 1 he landed at Boston, after having narrowly escaped shipwreck at Cape Sable. By September 6 he had arrived at Philadelphia, where he was gladly received by the Reformed congregation. With characteristic energy he at once began his travels, which are surprising in their length and continuance. Already the day after he arrived he traveled sixteen miles to visit Mr. Boehm; and the next, eight miles farther to visit Reiff and close up Reiff's accounts of the money collected in Europe. The following day he returned sixteen miles to Philadelphia. The next week he visited Mr. Dorstius in Bucks county, sixteen miles from Philadelphia. The week following he went with Mr. Weiss over the mountains to Oley, Berks county, and the following day to Lancaster to meet Mr. Rieger. Meanwhile Mr. Boehm had gone to Tulpehocken, where, on September 24, Mr. Schlatter and Mr. Weiss, after traveling twenty-nine miles the previous day, also arrived. The next day, as the congregation saw three Reformed ministers go together into their pulpit at Tulpehocken many of them wept, for they had not seen so many Reformed ministers together since they left the fatherland. Mr Schlatter invited the Reformed ministers to Philadelphia to a conference, October 12, 1746. All came but

Dorstius, who sent a friendly letter. They drew up articles of peace, but it was not a regular Coetal meeting, as no elders were present. Mr. Schlatter, continuing his travels, preached in a barn, October 18, at Providence, and in the afternoon traveled eighteen miles to Goshenhoppen to see Mr. Weiss. On the 20th he went to Indian Field, and by the 22d he was back in Philadelphia. During the winter Boehm installed him as pastor of the Philadelphia congregation, December 21, 1746, and of Germantown, February 15, 1747. As soon as spring opened, Schlatter began his travels again, going westward as far as Maryland.

The first Coetus began its sessions at Philadelphia, September 29, 1747,* at 9 A.M., in the parsonage of the Reformed church. The Rev. Mr. Rieger opened its sessions by preaching an edifying sermon on the 133d Psalm. Mr. Schlatter presided at the session as the superintendent appointed by the Dutch Church. There were present four ministers and twenty-seven elders,† as follows: *Philadelphia and Germantown*—Rev. Michael Schlatter; Daniel Bouton, John Gaul and Paul Geissel: *Falkner Swamp, Providence and Witpen*—Rev. John Philip Boehm; Frederick Reimer, Conrad Ribel, John Herpel, Michael Klem: *Goshenhoppen*—Rev. George Michael Weiss; Christian Snyder and Daniel Hiester, John Huth and Philip Ried, John Huber and Nicolas Montbauer: *Schaffer's Church and Erlentown in Conestoga*—Rev. John B. Rieger; Michael Weidler, Philip Rank: *Tulpehocken*—John Stem, Valentine Unruh: *Skippach*—Jacob Arnet, Peter Spyker: *Indian Field*—Michael Berger, Frederick Zollner: *Springfield*—Christian Shugg: *Blue Mountain and Egypt*—Abraham Wotring and Peter Kocher: *Little Lehigh*—Henry Roth: *Sacony*—Anthony Lerch: *Yorktown*—Casper Spengler.

The first session was consumed in making up the roll of delegates and churches. At the second and third sessions, Mr. Schlatter read the journal of his travels from June 1745, to March 1747, and its correctness was acknowledged by the Coetus. At the fourth session the Coetus took action in regard to Schlatter's coming and his instructions from the Reformed Church of Holland were approved. The Coetus also authorized Schlatter to report their proceedings to the Dutch fathers, and appointed a committee to examine his report, so as to see that he had caught the sense of their meeting. This committee consisted of Daniel Bouton of

* The name "Coetus" was derived from the organization of John à Lasco, at Emden, in 1544. The Pennsylvania Coetus was a sort of Synod composed of ministers and elders. But it had less power than a Synod, as its acts were subject to revision by the Church in Holland.

† We give their names in full, as this list has never before been printed in English.

Philadelphia, Paul Geissel of Germantown, Frederick Reimer of Falkner Swamp and John Huth of Goshenhoppen, who were instructed to sign it in the name of all. At the fifth session Schlatter read letters from various congregations, Indian Field, Manakesy, Conawago, Lancaster, Donegal, Maguntchy, Lehigh, Cocalico, Saucon and York, asking aid and the administration of the Lord's Supper. Also a letter from Rev. Mr. Lischy, the Moravian, asking to be received back into the Reformed Church. It seems that Mr. Schlatter had met Mr. Lischy the previous June while visiting congregations in the Lehigh valley. Lischy had by this time grown tired of the "Congregation of God in the Spirit," which had been absorbed by the Moravians. He found no opening for him to preach. He made an humble confession to Mr. Schlatter, of his wrongdoings toward the Reformed and asked to be permitted to come back. So he now sent his application to the Coetus. Mr. Schlatter then continued reading his journal from March 1 up to the time of the meeting of the Coetus. In it he made mention of Templeman, the pious schoolmaster of the Muddy Creek congregation, and suggested his ordination to the fathers in Holland. He also spoke of Wirtz, the schoolmaster of the Saucon and Springfield congregations, a Swiss, the son of the antistes or head minister of Zurich. He was never received by the Coetus, as Boehm violently opposed it, but afterwards became pastor of a Reformed congregation in West New Jersey, and was ordained by the Presbyterians, and died as pastor of the Reformed congregation at York, Pa., 1763. At the fourth session the Coetus acted on the case of Lischy, and appointed Schlatter and Rieger to go to York to see whether Lischy would be acceptable to that congregation, and also to find out whether he would allow himself to be ordained if found necessary. The Coetus recommended the congregations at Manakesy, Canogetschick in Maryland, Shenandoah, Southbranch, Potomac, Lykens Run and Germantown to the Synod in Holland for ministers. It closed its meeting by taking action with regard to the money Boehm had collected in New York for his little congregation at Skippach, amounting to forty-four pounds. As, however, that congregation had gone to pieces, Boehm wanted to know if he could not give that money to his new congregation at Witpen. The Coetus granted his request, giving, however, four pounds of it to Boehm himself, as he had served the Skippach congregation for more than twenty years and had received very little salary.

Thus were the Reformed congregations organized into a Coetus which in 1793 was changed into a Synod independent of Holland, and in 1863 still further enlarged into a General Synod.

V. Schlatter and the Coetus.

After the first Coetus, Mr. Schlatter continued his journeys among the churches, strengthening them and administering the Lord's Supper. He did this in addition to his pastorate at Philadelphia and Germantown. The second Coetus was held at Philadelphia, September 29, 1748. Of the ministers present at the first Coetus, all were present but Weiss. But the number of ministers was increased by three new arrivals from Holland, the Rev. Messrs. Leydich, Bartholomaus and Hochreutiner. Rev. Mr. Leydich preached the opening sermon in the new church at Philadelphia. Boehm was made president and Rieger secretary.

This second Coetus is in some respects equally important with the first, for although the first Coetus organized the Church, this gave it its peculiar stamp and character. It gave it its type of government and doctrine. All the ministers and elders affirmed, "with heart and soul," their adhesion to the Canons of Dort as well as to the Heidelberg Catechism, thus committing themselves to Calvinism—or, to speak with exact accuracy, all except Rieger, whose own elder, however, signed. Rieger objected to the treatment of predestination "as given by the Synod of Dort in the sense of Calvin," and seems to have been a Calvinist of a lower type than Calvin. He must have been a Calvinist, for he signed the Canons of Dort five years later at the Coetus of 1752, probably being permitted to interpret them as Martinius and Bishop Hall were permitted to interpret them at Dort, so as to allow belief in universal atonement. The other important decision of the Coetus was as to Church government. It adopted the Church Constitution of Boehm of 1725, and ordered it to be published. Boehm's Constitution had already been adopted by seven out of the ten Reformed congregations established before Schlatter came, namely Skippach, Whitemarsh, Falkner Swamp, Tulpehocken, Conestoga, Philadelphia and Witpen, while three refused to adopt it: Germantown, Goshenhoppen and Lancaster. Boehm, through the adoption of this Constitution by the Coetus, became thus the organizer of the Coetus as he had been of the individual congregations. He seems to have been a thorough parliamentarian, and his ideas on constitutional points as revealed in his letters are very clear. This Constitution, as we have seen, committed the Coetus to the Presbyterial form of government.

Several other matters were disposed of, such as, for example, Lischy's case. He was ordered to write a confession of faith to be sent to Holland for decision, and meanwhile was allowed to preach. He presented his confession of faith by November 3, 1748, and it was sent to Holland, where the Synod approved it in

August, 1751. This Coetus also elected the president for 1749, Mr. Rieger, and for 1750, Mr. Weiss, and gave careful instructions how its minutes might be safely kept. The three new ministers were appointed to their places by Schlatter—Hochreutiner to Lancaster, Bartholomaus to Tulpehocken and Leydich to Falkner Swamp and Providence. Thus Boehm was relieved of all his outlying districts and in his old age could serve the congregation at his home at Witpen. But his missionary spirit did not permit him to remain idle, for by January 29, 1749, he had consented to care for the congregations near Allentown, Magunschy and Egypt.

A sad calamity cast a shadow over the Church as young Hochreutiner was soon after killed by the accidental discharge of a gun; while still another sad calamity afflicted the Church in the death of Mr. Boehm, April 29, 1749, while on a journey to preach to the Egypt congregation near Allentown. This aged father deserves special mention, for he was both the founder, the organizer and the defender of the early Church. He saved her in the controversy with the Moravians and continued her historic existence. As his biographer, Mr. Dotterer says:* "The labors of John Philip Boehm extended over a period of nearly thirty years. His parish was Pennsylvania. When he began in 1720 the Indians were still numerous, having been little disturbed by the sprinkling of white settlers in these parts. To these children of the forest, the man of God going about—his mission a mystery to them—was a familiar figure. At that time few lawful roads had been laid out for travel, and he had to thread his toilsome way on horseback through the deep forest, over hills and across streams, over rough and tortuous paths. At intervals of miles apart he would come upon a clearing made by the hardy settler sheltered in the newly made log hut. At these rude firesides the pastor was a welcome guest. Here he comforted the afflicted and homesick, and at their Sabbath gatherings he brought to them those Gospel blessings denied to them since they had left their German homes." The fathers in Holland breathed their benediction on him. In a letter of June 20, 1729, they say: "Further, reverend brother, from our hearts we wish for all desirable blessings upon your person and work. The Father of light enlighten you by His Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him that you may also enlighten others. The God of all grace endue you with every holy ornament, and make you an example of the flock in life and faith, in love and purity." This wish was grandly fulfilled by the labors and faithfulness of Boehm. His biographer con-

* See *Rev. John Philip Boehm*, by Henry S. Dotterer, Philadelphia, 1890, pp. 20–22.

tinues: "Fidelity to the Church and to God were the motives that ruled him. Selfish considerations found no place in his heart. False brethren could not chill his zeal. Disparity of resources did not deter him. He met the peril single-handed. The time has come for us to realize the magnitude of his work. The Reformed Church owes him an unacknowledged debt. John Philip Boehm was the instrument of God that saved our Reformed Zion."

The third Coetus was held at Lancaster, September 27, 1749, and was opened by a sermon by Mr. Leydich. But as the brethren learned that a new minister, Rev. Mr. Steiner, from Winterthur, Switzerland, had just arrived at Philadelphia, with instructions from Holland, they cut short their meeting (as they did not know what instructions the fathers had sent them), and adjourned to meet at Philadelphia, October 20. On that date they met again at Mr. Schlatter's house, and the Coetus was opened by Mr. Rieger preaching the sermon. All were present except Bartholomaus of Tulpehocken, who was detained because of the sickness which so soon cut short his labors, and Mr. Steiner, who, although in Philadelphia, could not attend because of illness. Schlatter names five ministers as present, who seem to have been Rieger, Leydich, Weiss, Schlatter and probably Lischy, together with two Dutch students, DuBois and Marinus, and sixteen elders. Unfortunately the minutes of this Coetus are lost; only a small part of them referring to the church at Lancaster having been preserved in the library of the Reformed Theological Seminary there. Schlatter says of the meeting in his journal that it ended October 24, "with hearty thanksgivings to God for brotherly care and unity of sentiment."

We now enter upon a period of controversy between Schlatter and Steiner, which is all the more perplexing because the minutes of the Coetus of 1750 and also of 1751 are not yet found, although there are extant some letters of that period. It is somewhat difficult, therefore, to judge of the causes of the differences between these two men. Steiner was a considerably older man than Schlatter and had been a man of some prominence in Switzerland, where he had published a volume of sermons (1738), entitled, *The Midnight Cry*. This precedence in age and experience combined with a somewhat ambitious spirit may have made him feel that he was better suited to a central congregation like Philadelphia than a rural one at Lancaster. And although the Lancaster church had called him, a party was soon formed in the Philadelphia congregation in his favor, who liked, perhaps, his brilliant preaching more than the solid sermonizing of Schlatter, who excelled rather in practical ability and activity. The matter

was brought before the congregation and Steiner gained the victory by a vote of 140 to 110. This produced a controversy which was referred to arbitrators, five of whom were Quakers and one an Episcopalian. They decided in favor of Schlatter, clearing him of the charges brought by the Steiner party. Steiner's party then built a new church for themselves, of which he continued pastor for about two years, but remained at Germantown three years longer. The controversy between Schlatter and Steiner seems to have come before the Coetus in 1750 in some shape, and they probably decided for Schlatter, as Steiner no longer attended the Coetus, and, besides, Schlatter says in his journal that he was ready to report its proceedings to Holland, which he would hardly have been willing to do if its decision had been adverse to him.

An extra Coetus was held in Philadelphia December 13, 1750, which resolved, as the letters to and from Holland were getting lost and matters were getting into some confusion, and especially as the congregations were greatly in need of financial help and of ministers, that one of their number should be sent to Holland. It selected Schlatter, who sailed February 5, 1751, and arrived in Holland the 12th of April following. He presented his testimonials from the governor and secretary of Pennsylvania, and from the leading ministers of Philadelphia, also his journal and the papers about the Steiner difficulty. The Classis of Amsterdam vindicated him in the Steiner case, and at the request of the deputies he published an *Appeal* which describes the needy condition of the shepherdless congregations in Pennsylvania, where of the sixteen charges and forty-six congregations only six charges had ministers. He also makes a beautiful appeal for the Indians, referring to the labors of Brainard and Eliot among them. This *Appeal* was translated from the Dutch into German and English. At the request of the Synod of North Holland he also spent four months in traveling through Germany and Switzerland. His appeals created so much interest that $60,000 were collected in the three countries, whose interest was to be spent by the Dutch on the Pennsylvania churches. Even the poor Palatinate, which itself needed help, gave 300 guilders for its children beyond the sea. He found at the University of Herborn under Prof. Arnoldi such a missionary spirit that five young men were willing to come to America. He then returned to America, landing at New York, July 28, 1752, bringing with him six young ministers: Otterbein, Stoy, Waldschmidt, Frankenfeld, Wissler and Rubel, and 500 folio Bibles, printed at Basle, 1747, and 800 unbound Bibles.

When the Coetus of 1752 met October 18, at Lancaster, everything seemed hopeful. The first thing it did was to sign anew the

confessions of faith, namely, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort. Thus all the ministers gave their unqualified adhesion to Calvinism. It was the largest Coetus yet held. Eleven ministers were present, including five of the six that Schlatter had brought with him. Only Steiner was absent; though Rubel, "the rebellious Rubel" as Schlatter calls him (one of the six whom Schlatter brought with him), was absent at the opening. Rubel had been elected to the Philadelphia congregation in place of Schlatter, and he soon appeared before the Coetus and took the position against Schlatter, who was its president, that a minister without a charge had no right to be president of the Coetus. The Coetus, however, decided against Rubel, but unfortunately lost two of its ministers by it: Weiss, "because of an obstinate elder," and Wissler, who seems to have followed Rubel and Weiss, left the meeting with Rubel.

This little episode was the beginning of trouble in the Coetus. Before Schlatter went abroad the controversy had been largely a personal one between Steiner and himself. But now it affected the whole Coetus, and became a constitutional and financial one. The constitutional point was whether the Dutch Church should treat with the Coetus directly or through Schlatter as superintendent. His opponents felt that, however necessary Schlatter's office as superintendent might have been at first in order to organize the congregations and provide them with ministers, that time was now past. He had by 1752 completed their organization and provided them with ministers. They were, therefore, offended at his office of superintendent, which, they claimed, was contrary to Reformed principles, which held to the parity of the ministry. This question also became a financial one, as the moneys sent from Holland were sent to Schlatter as superintendent. Boehm had long before spoken slightingly of the inspectorship of Dorstius as being un-Reformed. He had forecast the present trouble in a letter just before his death, in which he asked the Dutch fathers, "How long is Mr. Schlatter to be superintendent over us?" No blame need necessarily be cast on Schlatter for his prominence as superintendent, as that office was created by the Dutch Church. And it is an open question whether he magnified his office too greatly. His enemies charge it, but his friends indignantly deny it. Mr. Schlatter's position as superintendent became at this juncture all the more prominent as he held hardly any other position among them, being pastor of the small congregation at Witpen, and preaching to a few adherents in Philadelphia. As a result of this unfortunate controversy, the Coetus split into two parts and in the fall of 1753 there were two Coetal meet-

ings held, Schlatter and his party, composed of Rieger, Lischy, Stoy, Otterbein, DuBois and Templeman meeting at Lancaster, while Weiss and Leydich, with their party, composed of Wissler, Waldschmidt, Frankenfeld, Rubel and Steiner met at Cocalico, Lancaster county. But both parties now seem to have felt that the breach had gone far enough, and if continued would imperil the work in Pennsylvania. So a month later, November 15, Schlatter and Steiner had a reconciliation and the latter agreed to submit to the Coetus and the Dutch Church.

After this reconciliation, Mr. Schlatter again went to Europe. A new field of labor was opening up to him in Pennsylvania. His *Appeal* for the Pennsylvania churches in 1751 had, through the efforts of the Rev. Mr. Thompson, pastor of the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam, been circulated widely through the British Isles, and created so much interest that a *Memorial to the English People* was printed in 1754. This described the impoverished condition of the Germans in Pennsylvania, and the danger lest England might through them lose this valuable colony to the French if she did not Anglicize them. As a result, $100,000 was raised in England and Scotland, the king of England giving $5000, and Scotland, $6000. The interest on this money was to be devoted to the establishment of charity schools among the Germans. The Society having control of these charitable schools elected Schlatter as its superintendent. He went to Holland to present his resignation to the deputies, which he did May 14, 1754. It was accepted and he was released from the pastorate in Philadelphia. He returned to America, and the next Coetus was more hopeful, as both parties in it were present. The office of superintendent having been abolished, there was peace. Schlatter, though no longer a pastor, was invited to remain a member of the Coetus, and was commissioned to send its minutes to Holland; but this communication was ordered to be written before the members of Coetus dispersed, so that there might be nothing in it that might reflect on any of the brethren. The next Coetus found the air still further cleared. The only minister who had through all this reconciliation remained away from the Coetus was Rubel. His case having been referred to the Church in Holland, they decided against him. This removed a bone of contention in America, as Rubel left Philadelphia for New Jersey, and the Philadelphia congregation returned to the Coetus again. Everything seemed to have become harmonious when suddenly trouble arose again. In the Coetal letter of 1755, Mr. Schlatter seems to have made some severe remarks, which caused offense. When the replies of the Dutch fathers came to America in 1756, their letters seemed to

indicate that Schlatter had transcended his instructions and communicated matters which the Coetus had not authorized him to communicate, especially in regard to his appointment to visit the churches. This angered the Coetus. It may have been possible, too, that the reaction among the Germans against the charity school scheme may have aided in prejudicing the Coetus against him. As a result of these charges, Mr. Schlatter resigned from the Coetus and permanently left it.

Schlatter's departure from the Coetus was much to be regretted both for his sake and for the sake of the Church. It was unfortunate for his sake because it robbed him to some extent of the honor due him from the Reformed churches of Pennsylvania. Had he stood by the Coetus like Boehm to the end of his life, all its future history would have redounded to his credit. But he unfortunately withdrew from it when most needed, instead of quietly waiting for the storm to blow over, when he could have regained his influence. For thirty-three years he lived at Germantown, and never in all that time attended a meeting of Coetus, although he occasionally preached in Reformed churches. But his separation from it was equally unfortunate for the Coetus. Had he, with his splendid executive ability, continued its leader, the German Reformed Church would probably have spread far and wide, and have been organized from Maine or even from Nova Scotia in the north to the Carolinas and Georgia in the south. Nevertheless, he did a remarkable work during the ten years he was in the service of the Pennsylvania churches. His labors were incessant. He rode scores of miles a day, preaching day after day, tiring out sometimes other ministers who accompanied him, who had to stop and rest. Before he went to Europe in 1751, he says he had traveled 8000 miles in Pennsylvania, and much of this was through bridle paths and amid severe danger and often in winter. All honor to him for his industry and abundant labors.

Having retired from the Coetus, Schlatter became a chaplain in the British army, and was present at the siege of Louisburg, Nova Scotia, in 1757. On returning, he purchased a home at Chestnut Hill, near Germantown, and called it Sweetland. During the Revolution, this home was attacked and plundered by the British, who were very angry that he, a chaplain in their army, should sympathize with the Americans. He died October 31, 1790,* universally respected, and counting among his acquaintances many of the leading men of Pennsylvania.

* He was buried in the Reformed graveyard at Philadelphia, now Franklin Square.

VI. The Coetus Before the Revolution.

Mr. Schlatter had left the Coetus, which was a severe blow to it; but there were still earnest, faithful men left to carry on its work, such as Otterbein, Leydich, Stoy, Weiss and others. Even Steiner seems to have become much more active since his entrance into the Coetus. While pastor at Frederick (1756–1759) he describes his large missionary tours, saying that it required a ride of 300 miles to cover his parish and that he had traveled 3000 miles. It was fortunate that the Coetus was becoming united within itself, for now an external danger threatened it. The terrible French and Indian War began to devastate the frontiers, and the charges at Lehigh Gap under Wissler, at Tulpehocken under Hendel, and at Winchester, Va., under Steiner, suffered severely. In 1765 the Coetus declared anew its adhesion to the Canons of Dort. In 1767 and 1768 the Dutch Reformed Classis of New York invited the Coetus to join with it, for it had become independent of Holland. But although the Coetus expressed itself favorably to the new institution of learning, Queens College, yet it refused to leave the Dutch fathers, because of its obligations to them for so kindly cherishing and liberally supporting it. This act pleased the Church in Holland very much. A number of excellent ministers were sent over from Holland, as Alsentz, 1757; Weyberg, 1762; Hendel, 1764; Pomp, 1765; Faber, 1766; Blumer, 1771; Helfenstein, and his step-brother, Helffrich, and also Gebhard, 1772. It had also to contend against unworthy men who tried to become pastors of its congregations or to be elected into its membership, as Pithan at Easton, Berger at Reading, and Zufall at Tulpehocken. Nobly it tried to prevent these adventurers from entering like wolves among the flocks and scattering the sheep. The Coetus, too, had been raising up young men from its own midst, such as Gobrecht, 1766; Weymer, 1768; Wack and Neveling, 1771; Weber and Wagner, 1772. Fortunate was it for her that she gained so many excellent ministers before the Revolution, for during that terrible period there were hardly any sent from Holland or added to their number.

VII. The Coetus During the Revolution.

The Germans pretty generally sympathized with the Americans against England, although there were some Tories among them. Stahlschmidt, a pastor near York, reveals the awkward position of the ministers. In his book, *A Pilgrimage by Land and Sea*, he says: "I acted with extreme caution, so as not to give offense to the Royalists in my congregation, but where such a party spirit

reigns, it is impossible for a minister's political sentiments to remain long concealed. An order was issued by the American Government to march against the enemy, which produced so much confusion that I could not do otherwise than advise them to yield as much as possible to present circumstances because it was incumbent on us to be obedient to existing authorities in all things not contrary to conscience. Those who vented their rage against the Congress were dissatisfied with me, especially one Royalist who went about among the congregation and stirred them up against me. The confusion increasing to the highest pitch, I perceived it was best to resign my charge." He left and went back to Europe.

But many of the ministers were more outspoken patriots than Stahlschmidt. Helfenstein at Lancaster preached to the American soldiers on their departure for conflict on the words, "If God be for us, who can be against us." He had the boldness to preach to the captive Hessians (many of whom were Reformed) on the text, "Ye have sold yourselves for naught, and shall be redeemed without money." This created a tremendous sensation among them. Gobrecht frequently addressed the troops *en route* for the army, encouraging them by his patriotism and strengthening them in their faith in God. Neveling was rich, but in order to help Congress, he reduced all his property to cash, and loaned it ($25,000) to Congress, for which he took only a certificate of Congress, which afterwards proved worthless. He died poor after the war. Hendel was accustomed to go over the Blue Mountains north of Tulpehocken to preach to the Reformed in the Lykens Valley. His sympathy with the patriots was so well known that, to defend him from the Indians, a delegation would come armed to meet him. They would guard him to the church, guard it while he was preaching, and bring him back safely to the Lebanon Valley, in which he lived.

The only congregation of which we have a record as taking an active position for liberty was the Philadelphia church. Its consistory, together with the Lutheran consistory and the German Society of Philadelphia, published an *Appeal* in 1775 to the Germans of New York and North Carolina, urging them to be true to the American cause. The memorial service for General Montgomery, who was killed at Quebec, was held February 19, 1776, in the Reformed church at Philadelphia. Weyberg, its pastor, dared even during the British occupation of Philadelphia to preach such patriotic sermons that the British, fearing lest his influence over the Hessians would make them desert, imprisoned him. When the British departed from Philadelphia, and the congregation again gained possession of their church, which had been used by the

British as a hospital, Dr. Weyberg took the significant text, "O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance. Thy holy temple have they defiled" (Ps. lxxix. 1). Baron Steuben, the pupil of Frederick the Great, was Reformed. He it was who saved our cause by teaching our soldiers the tactics and drills that made Frederick the Great victorious. For, as Lossing says, the Continental regular army never was beaten at a fair fight after he came.

But, while individual ministers and congregations took sides in this conflict, the Coetus did not, although Prof. Dubbs says it speaks in its letters to Holland of the English as enemies. Perhaps, as it was under the control of a foreign nation, Holland, it did not think it wise to be too outspoken and thus implicate Holland in her relations with England. Its meetings were sometimes interfered with, there being no meeting in 1778 or in 1780. And for about seven years there was no meeting held at Philadelphia, although almost every alternate meeting had been held there before. At times the Philadelphia congregation was cut off from the rest by the British army. And the Germantown, Whitemarsh, Skippach and Vincent congregations were overrun with marching armies. Coetus showed its appreciation of the dangers of the war by appointing a day of prayer in 1775, and issuing an appeal in 1779. The ministers suffered much from non-payment of salaries and the depreciation of money. Thus Stahlschmidt, of whom we spoke above, says "that when he resigned to go away to Europe there were thousands of dollars due him for salary, but as sixty or seventy paper dollars were only equivalent to one of silver, he could for all this money scarcely procure a new coat for himself." Because of this great depreciation of American money, the Dutch donation in 1777 of $1000 was especially comforting and helpful, as commanding a high premium. When the war closed, the Coetus, in 1783, speaks more hopefully and rejoices in the fact that its members are more nearly akin to the Dutch fathers because also citizens of a republic. During these eight years of war the ranks of the ministry had been considerably depleted by death, while only two or three additions had been made, namely, Runkel by ordination and Dubendorff, who had come over with the Hessians and who labored in Lykens Valley in great poverty and often in great danger from the Indians.

VIII. The Coetus After the Revolution.

After the Revolution, the meetings of the Coetus were held regularly, and there is a more hopeful tone. In 1789 it presented General Washington with a letter of congratulation on his election to the presidency of the United States, to which President Wash-

ington made an admirable reply. President Washington, while the yellow fever raged in Philadelphia, lived at Germantown in the house of Rev. Mr. Herman, the Reformed pastor, and tradition has it that he, on one occasion, partook of the communion in the Reformed church there. After Washington's death the Society of the Cincinnati held their memorial service in the Reformed church at Philadelphia, February 22, 1800.

Another important movement in the closing years of the Coetus was the religious awakening, which led later to the organization of the denomination called the United Brethren. One of the earliest ministers of the Coetus and one most respected for his ability and piety was Otterbein. The church at Baltimore had split into two parts, the aggressive and pietistic party desiring the services of Rev. Mr. Swope, while the other party was satisfied with the ministrations of Rev. Mr. Faber, the pastor. The Coetus tried to reunite the two parties, but failed, and in 1774 Otterbein was called as pastor of Mr. Swope's congregation. It seems that about the year 1770 there was a great awakening in Maryland and Upper Virginia. Great revival meetings were held. The lack of sufficient ministers to guide the movement gave opportunity for fanaticism. The arrival of Asbury, later bishop of the Methodists, aided the movement. Otterbein assisted Coke in the ordination of Asbury, 1784, to the bishop's office. Those great meetings in the neighborhood of Antietam were participated in by most of the Reformed ministers in that district, except the pastor of the First Reformed Church at Baltimore, and Faber, when pastor at Taneytown. But Weymer, pastor at Hagerstown; Henop, at Frederick; Wagner, at York; Hendel, at Tulpehocken; and Otterbein, at Baltimore, participated in them. Those who went into the movement were sometimes called New Reformed. Otterbein himself claimed that such meetings were truly Reformed, for in the northern Rhine region, from which he had come to America, they were common among the Reformed. The Coetus never by word or act condemned Otterbein for his pietism. "In the minutes," says Prof. Dubbs, "he is frequently mentioned in complimentary terms. The most influential members of the Coetus had themselves been trained under pietistic influences, and were not inclined to turn aside from a man who had been for years their leader."* Gradually the movement went beyond Otterbein and became fanatical; and it resulted in the organization of the "United Brethren." This, however, took place much later than the time of the Coetus, though its beginnings were in Coetus'

* *History of the Reformed Church in the United States*, in the "American Church History Series," by Prof. J. H. Dubbs, p. 311.

times. Otterbein himself, while sympathizing with such aggressive movements, was not inclined to extremes, for his voice was low in speaking, and he greatly loved the catechetical system of the Reformed Church. He was a churchly pietist. The United Brethren claim him as their founder, but it is certain that he never left the Reformed Church. Thus as late as the year before he died, he said to the Rev. I. Gerhart, a Reformed minister, "I also am a member of the Synod of the German Reformed Church, but cannot attend on account of old age." Nor is there any word on the Coetus' minutes to the effect that his congregation ever separated from the Coetus.*

Another important event was the founding of Franklin College at Lancaster. It was intended mainly for the education of the Germans, and was named after Benjamin Franklin, the largest private contributor to its endowment. When it was opened June 6, 1787, the Coetus held its meeting at Lancaster, where it was located. The attendance at this Coetus was unusually large, showing their interest in the new institution. The college soon declined in prosperity, but educated later some young men for the Reformed ministry.

In 1786 the last ministers were sent by the Holland Church to Pennsylvania, namely Herman and Troldenier. The Coetus had grown during its nearly half a century of existence so that at the time of its separation from Holland (1792) it had twenty-two ministers, 178 congregations and about 15,000 communicants.†

IX. Causes of the Separation.

There may be said to have been four causes that led to the separation of the Pennsylvania churches from Holland in 1792, and to the organization of a Synod in 1793.

1. A geographical reason. They were so far away from the mother Church in Holland that communication was difficult. Especially had it been so during the Revolutionary War. Often the letters were lost in the transmission, and the Coetus would have to wait for months or even for years for important decisions on its actions. This caused much inconvenience and confusion, and the Coetus finally found the arrangement too clumsy to be continued.

2. A constitutional reason. The Coetus had not been given the

* For a full discussion of the relations of Otterbein to the United Brethren see *Reformed Church Quarterly Review* for January, 1884, article "Otterbein and the Reformed Church," by Prof. J. H. Dubbs.

† See *Minutes of General Synod of the Reformed Church in the U. S.*, 1896, p. 51.

right of ordination by the Dutch fathers. Occasionally, in extreme cases, they took upon themselves to ordain young men without waiting to consult the Church in Holland. But the mother Church found fault with them for doing so. This led in 1791 to the Coetus taking action declaring its right to ordain its own ministers without waiting for the Dutch Church to give permission. This action was the first step taken toward the independence of the Coetus.

3. A national reason. The truth was, the Coetus was beginning to feel the effect of the Revolution and of American liberty. Politically, they had become free from England. That made them more restive under any foreign restraint, and so they soon became ready to become ecclesiastically free from Holland. The Coetus, too, was beginning to feel its own inherent strength, as it was becoming strong enough to take care of itself, and did not so much need the help, financial and otherwise, that came from Holland.

4. To these reasons may be added an educational one. The members of the Coetus for many years had desired an educational institution where they could prepare their own young men for the ministry. They felt more and more the necessity of raising up young men from their own congregations and not waiting for the Dutch Church to send men over. The example of the Dutch Reformed of New York and New Jersey in founding Queens College had had its influence. Mr. Helffrich, in the Coetal letter of 1786, is said to have urged on the Dutch fathers the founding of such an institution. He did this because, in 1784, the Dutch Church had sent over, together, three ministers from the canton of the Grisons, Switzerland, two of whom proved to be scandalous in life, Pernisius and Willy. The Coetus felt that it could raise up better men at home. So when Franklin College was opened in 1787, the Coetus greatly rejoiced and more than ever felt the want of such an institution. But the Dutch Church paid no attention to their requests on this point, and they became dissatisfied.

For such reasons as these the Coetus took action in 1792, declaring its independence of Holland, saying, "Inasmuch as we have not yet received a reply to our last letters and proceedings, it was resolved by a majority of votes that for the present we will transmit to our fathers in Holland only a letter and not our proceedings."

X. Resumé of the History of the Coetus.

Such was the origin, history and end of the Coetus of Pennsylvania, out of which the "Reformed Church in the United States,"

the second in size of the Presbyterial bodies in this country, has grown.

1. In doctrine it was Calvinistic. It accepted at its meeting of 1748, not only the Heidelberg Catechism, but also the Canons of Dort. This acceptance was renewed at the Coetus of 1752, and adhesion to the Dutch creeds is again professed in the Coetus of 1755 and 1765. The ministers sent over from Holland all subscribed to the Dutch formulas before they were sent over. Even as late as 1788 they professed their adherence to the Dutch standards. There can be no question about the Calvinism of the Coetus. It stamped our Reformed Church in America as Calvinistic in doctrine, on the subject of the decrees as well as on that of the Lord's Supper, which were held as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace.

2. In Church government it was Presbyterial and representative. The government was by ministers and elders in the Coetus, and by ministers and elders and deacons in a consistory. They had the right of Church discipline, which has been a distinctive feature of the Calvinistic Church government.

3. In worship it had a simple, plain service. Formulas were commonly used for the extraordinary services, such as the sacraments and marriage, the Palatinate, Netherlands and sometimes the Basle liturgies being used. But the regular Sunday service was plain and simple, without responses, and therefore like the Reformed worship abroad. It is a very significant fact that for a century (1746 to 1844) no liturgy was published by the Church. If she had been a liturgical Church, that would have been an impossibility, for she would have had to make some provision by publishing liturgies so that her members might take part in responsive worship. The absence of any such publication proves that a responsive worship was not in use. And it is significant that when the Mayer liturgy was published in 1844, it was without any formulas for the regular Sunday services, thus showing that the custom of our forefathers was to have the Sabbath service free.

For all the care and generosity of the Reformed Church of Holland, the German Reformed of Pennsylvania and of the United States owe a deep debt of gratitude. The separation between the Coetus and the mother Church was not owing to any controversy between them, but was due to circumstances over which neither had control, and which forced them apart. That the Church of Holland so kindly cared for them, so patiently listened to their complaints, so wisely decided these, and so generously supported them, is but an index of the spirit of liberality with which the Reformed

Church of the Netherlands supported needy churches in all parts of the globe. She was the greatest sustentation and missionary society in the world in the last century. Her money and sympathy were sent to the East Indies, South Africa, Poland, the Waldenses, the Palatinate, and everywhere where there was a needy church. The General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States, at the centenary of the organization of its Synod (1893), authorized its officers to forward a memorial to the Reformed Church of Holland, expressing their gratitude to that Church for the unbounded sympathy and care bestowed on us in the time of our need, extending to them Christian greeting, and invoking the divine blessing on their labors.

READING, PA. JAMES I. GOOD.

III.

PRINCETON COLLEGE ADMINISTRATIONS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

UP to the close of Dr. Witherspoon's presidency, Princeton College during each administration derived its special traits almost wholly from the president. He determined its curriculum: he exercised its discipline in all serious cases; he begged money for its maintenance; he led its religious life; he taught several branches of learning to the members of the higher classes. The distance at which many of the trustees lived and the difficulties of travel prevented frequent meetings of the board, and threw on him responsibilities, in number and variety, far beyond those now devolved on college presidents. The faculty of instruction was made up of himself and two or three tutors. The latter, by the constitution of the college, were so completely under his direction as scarcely to deserve the name of colleagues. The relation between the president and the students was immediate and close. He stood to them *in loco parentis*, and they felt at liberty to go to him at all times for advice and for aid. Princeton was fortunate in its presidents. Each was fitted by his character and prepared by his previous career for the conduct of his office. All had been pastors. In obedience to what they believed to be a divine vocation, all in early manhood had undertaken the cure of souls. Some of them had successfully conducted private schools, and all had had their religious affections warmed by evangelical revival. If some of the readers of this historical sketch should be disposed to criticise it because so much attention has been given to the presidents, the answer is obvious: the life of the college was almost wholly directed and determined by the president for the time being. To send a student to Princeton was to commit him to Samuel Davies or John Witherspoon for the formation of his character, for the discipline of his faculties, and, in some measure, for the direction of his subsequent life.

The death of Witherspoon marks the point at which the president loses much of his relative prominence. From this point onward the college has a powerful life of its own. Of course, the president is always the great figure in a college. But the

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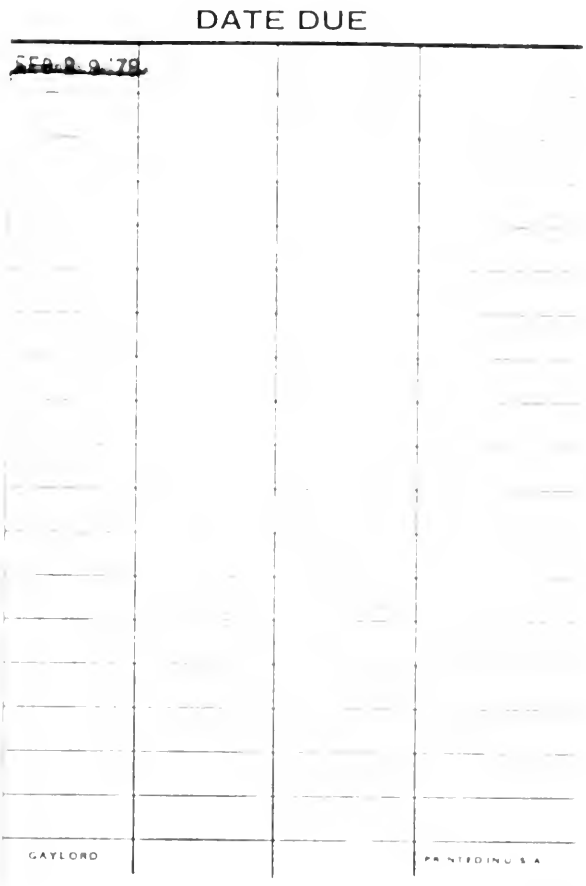

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